

The Design of an Interprofessional, Community-Responsive Curriculum

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Champions abound for the inclusion of interprofessional collaboration knowledge in curricula for human service professionals. Scholars and practitioners recognize that those who work in classrooms, counseling offices, storefront drop-in centers, community clinics, full-service schools, and other settings need specific kinds of knowledge not typically found in professional preparation programs (Houle, Cyphert, & Boggs, 1987; Corrigan & Udas, 1994; Gardner, 1994; Lawson & Hooper-Briar, 1994). The question now is *what* learning experiences will give human service professionals the frameworks and tools necessary to work collaboratively and more responsively than the conventional patterns of hu-

man service? *What* central ideas comprise the interprofessional “knowledge base” that aspiring professionals should master? *How* should these ideas be taught, by whom, in what settings and sequence, and with what relationship to existing professional preparation programs?

More than one reasonable answer exists to these and related questions about the design of an interprofessional curriculum, and the answers are to some extent dependent on the community and institutional context in which it is created. Regardless of context, curriculum designers must grapple with the fact that interprofessional programs will inevitably serve a diverse array of students whose professional interests and backgrounds are likely to exceed the range of individuals typically attracted to any one profession. Inescapably, the curriculum will be *interdisciplinary*. The designers will draw on multiple, sometimes competing, claims to knowledge about human problems and how to deal with them as set forth by faculty representing different disciplines—each with its own theoretical, historical, and practical foundations. The aspiration to make the curriculum *community-responsive* brings a further set of perspectives to bear on the curriculum design task, those of practitioners and residents.

We explore questions of interprofessional curriculum design by analyzing one case of such design work—our own. We start by outlining in detail the content and structure of learning activities in the model created at the University of Washington (UW) in its mature form after several years of developmental work, and then showing how this curriculum structure addresses fundamental curricular design issues. In light of several alternative models at other universities, we then critique key assumptions underlying this design to reveal various possibilities and trade-offs that may arise in the design process. Finally, we reflect on the process by which the curriculum design evolved.

A Fully Developed Interprofessional Curriculum

The curriculum constructed by the UW team covered a year-long course and related learning activities (all together, the rough equivalent of several conventional semester-long courses in a degree program), which were designed to complement existing programs of study in five professional schools that provided entry-level training for conventionally defined professional roles. Thus, the curriculum does not represent an entire professional preparation program, but rather several components of it. Taken together, these components offer graduate-level students understanding and skills in community-responsive collaborative work. We describe the curriculum below as students would have experienced it—first, as encountered in an orientation meeting offered in the fall of the academic year and then as an ongoing sequence of learning activities stretching across the ensuing seven months.

A First Taste of the Curriculum

The bulk of the two-day orientation meeting is devoted to four activities, which collectively serve to introduce the primary features of the curriculum: a skit dramatizing the need for integration of human services; an introduction to interdisciplinary student groups (referred to hereafter as "cohorts") which will undertake a community service project, along with an initial planning session regarding the project; a group activity in which each cohort constructs a physical model of community collaboration, using various simple materials; and a presentation of key ideas about collaboration.

Theater of the Absurd: There Must be a Better Way

Orientation commences with a skit put on by the program teaching faculty that playfully caricatures the perspectives brought by various human services professions and community members to the predicament of the sixteen-year-old daughter of an African-American woman on welfare in her young thirties. The girl, named Gloria, is not doing well in school and has been missing from school a great deal recently, a situation which causes her to be noticed by school authorities. Her mother tells us about what it's like to raise four kids by yourself and also about Gloria whom her mother hasn't seen for two days. A succession of human services professionals (all white) and other community members—a recreation program director, an apartment manager, the bagger at the grocery store, a high school English teacher, a public agency manager, the school nurse, a public health worker focusing on teenage pregnancy, and a social worker who spends four hours per week in the school—then speak to the audience about what they know of Gloria and her family, offer their interpretation of what has gone wrong, and summarize what they think they can do to help her. Throughout, as professionals come and go, Gloria's mother is shaking her head saying, "There must be a better way." The skit closes with all professionals on stage coming independently to the same conclusion, and echoing her refrain.

Beneath the caricatures are two serious messages: first, the problems that many individuals and their families face in today's society transcend the capacities and skills of individual human services, conventionally construed; and, second, both service providers and community members have yet to discover effective forms and means for working together to address these problems.

Introduction to Cohorts, Communities, and the Service Project. Following the presentation of the skit, the audience of approximately 50 students from five different graduate-level professional preparation programs (Social Work, Nursing, Education, Public Affairs, and Public Health & Community Medicine) move into

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four cohorts that have been prearranged to balance the students' disciplinary backgrounds, professional specializations, and interests in working on one of several joint projects to benefit a host community located near the university (project ideas had been developed at an earlier time by groups of community members). During the application process, students have indicated preferences for cohort assignment based upon project focus (e.g., intergenerational activities to promote public health in a certain neighborhood; the development of communication links between schools and newly arrived immigrant families in another neighborhood), and in most instances, a first or second preference is honored. Cohort members are challenged to coalesce around the project task over the next seven months. In so doing, they will need to form themselves into an effective working team, which acknowledges their respective talents and viewpoints, and melds these into a viable collaborative unit. The task includes defining in more specific terms what the project is to be; the presentation of project goals is thus purposefully broad and, to an extent, vague.

Seated in circles, the students introduce themselves and their aspirations for professional work and for their learning in the program. Each group's facilitators—a university faculty member and a community-based practitioner, who will work with each cohort throughout the seven month period—talk about what they, too, bring to the group, offer information about the communities in which the cohort will work, describe the general focus for project work, and outline several forms the project might take, while making it clear that the details of the project remain to be worked out by the group. After a brief presentation to everyone about the two community settings in which the cohorts will carry out their project, the cohorts are on their own, confronting the excitement and uncertainty of getting to know one another, defining and conducting a viable project, and extracting from their experience an understanding of interprofessional collaboration. Following other activities described below, they reconvene and spend several hours in an initial planning session, getting further acquainted, imagining possibilities, airing concerns, sharing schedules, and brainstorming ways to approach their project work.

The Construction of a Physical Model of Community Collaboration. Besides introductory, team-building conversations, cohorts are given a group task to perform. To help them visualize the nature of their future collaborative work and the process they will undergo in carrying out this work, cohorts are asked to construct a physical model of community collaboration, using materials that each person is provided. In this way, the cohort members devote more than an hour to figuring out how to bring their respective and diverse physical objects into a construction that represents concretely the abstraction "community collaboration." When it is done, they present and explain their models to the members of other cohorts, who reciprocate. An animated discussion ensues regarding the group's processes and the roles people assumed. Members remark with surprise at how they

managed their construction without formally designated leaders, involved each other, found or forged connections between seemingly unrelated objects.

Framing Ideas: The "Five Essences." A final component of the orientation is more didactic than the preceding three. Program staff and faculty present a series of ideas about collaboration that underlie the program. Referred to in the program as the "Five Essences," these ideas reflect central themes in the emerging literature on collaborative professional work, and consequently in the learning that students will do. The ideas provide an overarching framework into which more specific notions about collaborative practice can fit. The five essences are as follows:

1. *Requirements for collaboration.* Distinguishing "collaboration" from "coordination" and "cooperation" (following the argument of Kagan, 1991, Schorr, 1989, and Winer & Ray, 1994, among others in the growing literature on interprofessional practice), the faculty define the focus of the program, with emphasis on the mental operation of learning how to benefit from diverse thinking based on a commitment to act. Faculty assert that "collaboration" requires various things: (a) a commitment by diverse groups to a common mission; (b) new organizational structures, regarding both individual professional roles and the division of labor among them; (c) clear communication among the collaborating partners; (d) the sharing of power and leadership; (e) the pooling of, or joint search for, resources; and (f) the development and execution of collaborative plans.

2. *The stages of collaboration.* Building on familiar characterizations of group development (see Johnson & Johnson, 1994), faculty argue that collaborative groups move through a predictable series of stages as they attempt to realize a common mission (adapted from Winer & Ray, 1994). These stages subsume and expand on other ideas about the group formation process, characterized by some as moving through stages of *forming*, *storming*, *norming*, and *performing* (see Tuckman & Jenson, cited in Johnson & Johnson, 1994), but combine with these process concepts ideas about the group's evolving capacity for task-related work.

3. *Collaboration as betterment or empowerment.* The stance of professionals toward the people who they are trying to help reveals alternative political and social dynamics, which have profound consequences for the results of collaboration (see Himmelman, 1992). Approached one way, as "betterment" of people's lives, collaborative work retains initiative for improvement among professional people, in other words, *outside* those helped, leaving them dependent on external assistance, without internal resources or confidence that they can help themselves over the long term. Approached differently, collaborative work can seek to empower people, by working hard to nurture initiative *within* client families and communi-

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ties, for example, by treating parents as full members of a multidisciplinary "case management" team. Building on these ideas, and others regarding partnership between service providers and those served (see Kinney, Strand, Hagerup, & Bruner, 1994), the quintessential collaborator is viewed as one who relinquishes control and includes others in decisionmaking that affects them.

4. *A predisposition towards strengths-based family and community support.* Related to their stance toward the people they are trying to help, are the models collaborating professionals hold of the "problem" they are addressing. While long established models of the "problem" emphasize people's deficiencies or deficits, thereby locating the problem in the client, a more recent wave of theory and practice in virtually all fields of human service directs professionals toward the strengths, assets, and resilience of their students, client families, or the communities in which their clients live (e.g., McKnight & Kretzman, 1992; Saleebey, 1992; Kinney, Strand, Hagerup, & Bruner, 1994; Benard, 1990). Students are encouraged to adopt the latter perspective in approaching their collaborative work.

5. *The role of constructive controversy.* Finally, students are alerted to the inevitability of conflict in collaboration, and that it may be worked with productively and used as a tool for furthering collaborative ends, rather than avoided as an unpleasant accompaniment to joint effort (as argued in Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Senge, 1994).

These five sets of ideas permeate the design of the curriculum and appear repeatedly in reading assignments, reflective discussion, and the activities of the cohorts. Other important ideas concerning the competencies themselves receive less attention during the orientation, though they underlie the structure of assignments and topical subject-matter of a series of program-wide meetings ("community colloquia") described below.

The Contours of the Curriculum Across the Year

In such an orientation, students encounter in microcosm the kinds of learning challenges and experiences that characterize the curriculum as a whole: experiential learning of collaboration in a community-based cohort; parallel exposure to ideas about collaboration through readings, presentations, and large group discussions; and periodic, systematic reflection on learning experiences.

Experiential Learning in Community-based Cohorts. In this design, the bulk of the students' learning takes place within the cohort. The curriculum thus places great emphasis on learning through the experience of working collaboratively with a group of individuals who come from different disciplinary backgrounds, on a project that serves a particular, community-defined need. In much the same way

that students of a foreign language are taught it through immersion in the language, human service professionals are “taught” to collaborate effectively through the immediate personal experience of trying to make collaboration work to address a recognized “real” need.

In this design, there are many dimensions to the learning experience. Students *develop and carry out plans for a community service project*, which addresses a need initially defined by a community task force; *take leadership responsibility* for the activities of the group in whatever ways and to whatever degree they feel comfortable; *draw on the ideas and resources of a pair of professional facilitators*, each from a different disciplinary background (e.g., a professor of education and a family counselor with a social work degree), who guide discussion, as needed, and model collaborative interaction; *discover appropriate means and forms for collaboration*, guided by the group's facilitators, readings, and other program presentations; and *involve community members as soon as feasible*, using a community-based cohort facilitator as a source of contacts.

Didactic Presentation and Discussion of Ideas About Collaborative Work. To help students reach the ambitious expectations outlined above, the curriculum offers students a steady stream of ideas about collaborative professional work, issues in integrating human services, and approaches to realizing collaborative service goals. These ideas are embedded, in part, in a series of readings drawn from two textbooks—*Collaboration Handbook: Creating, Sustaining, and Enjoying the Journey* (Winer & Ray, 1994) and *Joining Together* (Johnson & Johnson, 1994)—and from a series of articles. These readings relate to the topical structure of a six-session “community colloquium” series—for example, the following six sessions:

Calendar of Topics for the Year 3 Community Colloquium Series

Session 1 (January): From Vision to Action to Implementation (an introduction to basic ideas about collaboration, communication skills, and associated group processes).

Session 2 (February): Leadership for Collaboration (what collaboration implies for sharing of leadership, conflict resolution, and power).

Session 3 (March): Organizational Savvy (organizationally-based cultures, language, values, and mission implied by collaborative work).

Session 4 (April): Challenges and Red Herrings (thorny issues like confidentiality).

Session 5 (May): National Reforms and Local Efforts (how local efforts fit into a larger national movement towards the integration of human services).

Session 6 (June): Stories, Reflections, Celebrations, and Endings.

Meeting monthly, these sessions bring together students and others from all the cohorts for a presentation by program faculty (and sometimes visitors), accompanied by discussion and small group meetings designed to extend the conversation and relate the topical material to what is going on in cohorts. The topics are sequenced to correspond to likely times in the cohort development process when topical ideas would be most helpful to the students—difficult times to predict.

Tools and Occasions for Reflection. Paralleling both the experiential and didactic strands of activity, a third set of activities, aimed at encouraging reflection on both experience and ideas, is built into the curriculum in three ways. First, within cohort meetings themselves, students are encouraged to engage in some regular and systematic reflection (e.g., by setting aside a small amount of time in the meeting for this purpose during which all members comment on the group's process). Second, students are asked to keep journals, which cohort facilitators collect periodically for comment and continued private "conversation." Third, at the monthly colloquium, smaller break-out groups facilitated by program faculty are convened to reflect on the implications of the readings and topical presentations for collaboration.

How the Curriculum Reflects Fundamental Design Considerations

This snapshot of an interprofessional curriculum can be understood in terms of design considerations that must be addressed by any curriculum (see Schwab, 1970; Posner, 1995). In these terms, a curriculum (1) reflects the social and institutional context in which it is carried out; (2) takes into account the capabilities, backgrounds, and professional interests of the students who are the primary audience for the curriculum; (3) draws on the knowledge claims of one or more disciplines; and (4) embodies a conception of learning.

While not representing all or even typical interprofessional curricula, the form and content of the UW curriculum reflects each consideration in ways that are instructive. To begin with, the wider social context provides some obvious pressure for interprofessional curriculum at the current time. An institution of higher education such as UW rises to the challenge within a web of larger institutional constraints (e.g., discipline-based accreditation, state licensing and credentialing requirements) and existing programmatic and curricular commitments within the university. In particular, UW houses defined programs of graduate-level study that prepare individuals for the five human service professions (nursing, social work, education, public health, and public agency management) for which this curriculum was prepared. This means that students come to this interprofessional program having learned (or in the process of learning) about their chosen professional disciplines through prescribed sequences of coursework. There are several implica-

tions for the design of the curriculum—it must complement coursework and other learning activities already in place, and not significantly add to already full programs of study. And, if it is to become a credit-worthy part of these programs, it must also fill a niche within the logic of these programs that may or may not yet exist.

Whatever else one can say about them, the students drawn to (or required to) participate in interprofessional programs are likely to be highly diverse, in virtually every way one can imagine such diversity—background, cultural orientation, predisposition, professional experience, basic values, and so on. In the UW case, this diversity was expressed in an enormous range in what students knew (e.g., about people, leadership, human services work) or wanted to know, and how they approached professional learning. Differences in professional background were also pronounced: some prospective students were inexperienced in professional work, having just emerged from B.A.-level training, while others were older, seasoned professionals seeking to augment their repertoires and equip themselves with a Master's-level credential. Thus, students came with different professional identities, and at different stages in the formation of a secure professional identity. The curriculum design needed to accommodate this fact, and it did so by attempting to exploit student diversity as a stimulus for learning in cohorts. The curriculum also sought to address student diversity by offering a variety of modes for learning that included an experiential component, didactic exposure to ideas, and opportunities to reflect on both ideas and experiences.

Because the program seeks to prepare people for interprofessional work, its curriculum inescapably draws on the knowledge bases, premises, and frameworks of professional and academic disciplines, which differ in ways that can both complement and compete with one another. For historical and epistemological reasons, as well as by virtue of the specialized division of intellectual labor in universities, these disciplines construe human needs and associated services differently. The UW team faced just this fact as it groped for a framework that would respect differences in viewpoint while offering some consensus on which curriculum could be built. We eventually chose to use a *systems model* which recognized that individual attitudes and behaviors are embedded, not only within small groups and organizations, but ultimately within whole cultures. Within this framework, we approached the “clients” of human services programs (and also student-professionals) from a *developmental perspective* (building on Winer & Ray, 1994). We subsequently added a political dimension to our framework by making *the empowerment of communities and service recipients* (as framed by Himmelman, 1992; McKnight & Kretzman, 1992; and Kinney, Strand, Hagerup, & Bruner, 1994) a central consideration in designing and executing collaborative work. Finally, we took advantage of converging lines of work related to *small group dynamics* in different fields (e.g., Johnson & Johnson, 1994), which offered a focus on an arena in which much collaborative work takes place, especially that in which students, faculty, and community people would engage.

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These central ideas represented a significant point of curriculum consensus among the divergent knowledge bases of the participating professional schools. The professional literatures of education and nursing have been strongly influenced by developmental constructs (e.g., a vast literature on developmental psychology as an underpinning for student learning in education), while the literatures of social work, public health, and public affairs show significant effects of systems thinking. Recent attention to empowerment ideas are evident in the literatures of various professional realms (e.g., McKnight & Kretzman, 1992; Kadel, 1993; Himmelman, 1992, 1995). On this base we added ideas from the newly emerging literature on collaborative professional work and the integration of human services (e.g., Behrman, 1992; Kahn & Kamermann, 1992; Kagan & Neville, 1993; Kirst, 1992; Melaville, Blank, & Asayesh, 1993).

The result in the UW case was a curriculum that emphasized points of convergence and consensus among disparate professional disciplines. In addition, we recognized that there was some new "specialized" knowledge particular to interprofessional work itself—a loosely related set of concepts and principles that captures the essence of what differently trained professionals do when they join forces around community needs (e.g., recognizable developmental stages through which collaborative efforts progress), and we built these ideas into the curriculum as well.

Finally, any professional curriculum embodies a conception of learning itself: a set of notions about the nature of professional knowledge and how it is acquired. Here, the cleavages among and within professions are substantial, ranging across a spectrum of ideas about learning. At one end of the continuum are views that emphasize the transmission of a fixed body of knowledge to relatively passive "recipients" of learning; at the other end of the continuum, notions of learning emphasize the learner's more active construction of a fluid, emergent "body" of knowledge by interacting with ideas and situations in a more dynamic learning environment (see Brooks & Brooks, 1993). A parallel set of ideas concern the acquisition of skills—some curricula emphasize the acquisition of discrete professional skills (e.g., how to interview clients, how to teach social studies, how to draw blood) in settings such as laboratories or classroom-based simulations that are separated from the context of practice, while others urge skill development through immersion in complex, "real" practice settings from early in a student-professional's learning career. An emphasis on learning about collaboration in "real" settings resonated with the UW team in various ways, and seemed to offer a better fit to the nature of what was to be taught. At the same time, we recognized that experiential modes of learning place a heavy burden on the learner, and so we coupled them with other means of exposing learners to ideas, as described earlier.

Issues and Insights into Interprofessional Curriculum Design

A first set of insights into the curriculum design problem posed by interprofessional programs comes from a close look at the assumptions, consequences, and trade-offs involved in the design choices just presented. This kind of critical analysis does not replace the test of experience about which we have written elsewhere (Knapp, Barnard, Brandon, Gehrke, Smith, & Teather, 1994). But a careful look at assumptions, aided by examples from other campuses, does help one consider the many alternatives available to designers of interprofessional curricula. At a minimum, such an analysis helps to reveal reasonable possibilities for curriculum design, while acknowledging that no one alternative "does it all" (Lawson & Hooper-Briar, 1994).

Alternative Curricular Models

Interprofessional programs located at three other universities (San Francisco State University, Ohio State University, and Miami University/Ohio University) offer useful reference points for understanding the UW curriculum. While they share a number of features, the curricula offered by these programs contrast with UW and with each other in institutional setting, conception of audience, and the interweaving of disciplinary knowledge bases in curricular content.

Post-graduate Collaborative Human Services Training at San Francisco State University (SFSU). This program is designed for experienced professionals who already hold entry-level degrees and certification in their respective professions (general and special education, nursing, psychology, social work, and administration). The 19-credit, year-long sequence of coursework and internships prepares these individuals for a new professional niche, labeled "integrated services specialist", a role that fills "an immediate need in California for personnel with an enhanced set of collaborative and interdisciplinary skills" (Wilson, Karasoff, & Nolan, 1993, p. 161). Specialists with this training find work in the numerous school-based and school-linked interagency partnerships that state initiatives have put in place the last half dozen years. Because it prepares for a new specialty, the curriculum is not subject to the constraints that accreditation and certification requirements impose on established professional specialties. Coursework and fieldwork focus on "the [nature of] integrated and collaborative services, public policy and legal issues, services within the home, school and community in a multicultural environment, facilitating change and collaborative practice in education and human services" (p. 162). Concurrent practicum and internship experiences, totaling 240 hours across the year, place individual students in established interagency arrangements (there are many in the San Francisco Bay Area), in which students observe, and work

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alongside, professionals who are already immersed in collaborative work. Emphasis is placed throughout on cross-training and supervision, by intentionally linking students with faculty and field supervisors whose disciplinary training differs from that of the student.

Graduate Program Offered by the Interprofessional Commission of Ohio at Ohio State University (OSU). A long established interprofessional program located in this University offers coursework (and limited field experiences) that complement graduate student programs of study in many realms of human service and professional work: education, law, medicine, nursing, social work, allied medical professions, and theology (Casto, 1994). Unlike the SFSU program, the Commission's program does not provide a degree or specialist certificate of any kind, but rather offers an added dimension to students' respective programs of study. Interested students may take one or more courses from an evolving menu of offerings that varies by year, depending on which faculty are "on loan" to the Commission (it has no permanent faculty). The half dozen or more courses offered in a given year address "the complex questions and problems raised by our technological society in the areas of changing social values, ethical issues common to the helping professions, interprofessional care for clients, and public policy formulation and analysis" (Casto, 1986, p. 324; Casto & Julia, 1994). Students are encouraged to participate in more than one course, to enhance their prospects of moving through "a progression of awareness:....sensitivity to collaboration is followed by openness to others' professional perspectives, followed by engagement in cooperative service delivery, and, finally, cooperation in policy formulation" (Lawson & Hooper-Briar, 1994, p.33). While this progression represents a long-range aspiration for the program, the curriculum in place during most years does not afford extensive opportunities for practicum and internship experience, analogous to the SFSU and UW programs, that would constitute "engagement" in service delivery or policy formulation; at the same time, the conceptual content of the program is more far-reaching in any given year, and more varied across years, than what is offered by the other two programs.

Undergraduate Interprofessional, Service-based Learning at Miami/Ohio University (M/OU). This program affords yet another model, in this instance aimed at undergraduate education that combines interdisciplinary pre-professional exposure with liberal arts studies. The M/OU program seeks to reach undergraduates who may or may not yet have formed clear professional aspirations (some have, and are enrolled in undergraduate-level pre-professional education sequences). But the program is equally concerned that students develop a more general understanding of society, social needs, and their possible roles in response to those needs (Lawson & Hooper-Briar, 1994). The curriculum in this program contains a variety of learning experiences, including conventional courses, service learning opportunities, and for individuals in the helping professions, cross-role experience.

The interprofessional curricula of these three programs, alongside that of the UW, bring to light critical assumptions about the purpose and target audience of an interprofessional curriculum, interprofessional knowledge, and how this knowledge may be acquired.

Assumptions about Curricular Purpose and Target Audience

As the examples of other programs illustrate, an interprofessional program may target undergraduates before they have entered formal professional training, as with the M/OU model; new candidates for professional work who are in the midst of a training program, as at the UW; and advanced professionals seeking further training to prepare them for new dimensions of their practice or for newly invented professional niches, as in the case of the SFSU program. At the same time, the program may provide specialized, focused professional training, or a more generalized core of knowledge pertinent to a wide range of professional applications. The nature of what is to be taught thus varies with decisions about who is to be taught, at what stage in their education, and for what purpose. The choices made involve inevitable trade-offs.

For example, in preparing for specific "intervention specialist" roles, the participants in the SFSU program are given experiences that equip them to carry out collaborative work in a specific kind of interagency setting, defined by the school-based and school-linked arrangements that were proliferating in the state at the time. The translation of training into actual practice is likely to be direct and substantial. The trade-off involved in such training curricula is that a wider range of possibilities for collaborative practice may not be considered by the learners, at the same time that a particular form of collaborative practice is being mastered. The UW curriculum widens the range of possibilities, but perhaps does so at the expense of concrete preparation for particular forms and models of collaborative practice. The menu of courses offered by the OSU Commission further expands the range of possible applications of interprofessional principles; students' choice of course may then narrow the field to more specific areas of application.

At the heart of this decision is a tension between specialization and disciplinary integration. If interprofessional work is conceived of as a newly emerging specialty, then it invites treatment parallel to other professional specializations, which means curricula that introduce novices to its unique vocabulary, organizing ideas, and emerging body of specialized knowledge. But building curricula around one or more interprofessional specializations risks distancing them from the knowledge domains claimed by other specializations. In some degree, all of the programs discussed in this chapter attempt such an introduction, but not all seek to draw boundaries around a "specialized" domain of work. Their differences seem mostly driven by how far the learner has progressed in a professional preparation sequence,

how specific the learner's preparation goals are, and how comprehensively the programs define the learner's experience in pursuit of degrees.

Assumptions about Interprofessional "Knowledge"

Behind questions of specialized knowledge are fundamental assumptions about what constitutes interprofessional "knowledge" and what aspects of this knowledge base should be conveyed to novices. These assumptions concern at least the following: (1) whether there exists a unifying body of knowledge that transcends the sum of the separate canons of each collaborating profession; (2) the extent to which the core of the knowledge base concerns collaborative process or substantive content; (3) how the knowledge base balances skills, predispositions, and conceptual understandings; (4) the question of professional expertise versus immersion in the specific communities; and (5) the underlying conception of the knowledge base as fixed and cumulative or emergent and fluid.

Sum of the Parts or a Greater Whole?

Interprofessional curricula must grapple with what balance among knowledge of one's own discipline, of others', and of collaboration itself constitutes "interprofessional knowledge." In one simple view, "interprofessional knowledge" is the sum total of what professionals in different specialized areas know and know how to do. Collectively, these differing bodies of expertise are brought to bear on a common problem that requires more than one expert perspective. But this simple assertion contains several conundrums. First, collaborating professionals need to know *something* about expertise other than their own, if for no other reason than to know how and with whom to start a problem-solving conversation and what questions to ask, no less to understand what the other is saying in response. But no single professional can master all or even most of another body of professional expertise, let alone three or four others. If so, *how much* does one need to know about other professions' frameworks, worldviews, vocabularies, and skill repertoires? Beyond what one knows about one's own profession or others', what knowledge about collaboration itself must all professionals share to work together effectively?

The UW curriculum, and to an extent the others, answer these questions in a way that is both expedient and principled. The constraints of time in the year-long UW curriculum prohibit extensive introductions to social work, education, nursing, and other professional specialties, and so the matter is left to single sessions that sensitize students to disciplinary differences (e.g., starting with the caricatures in the orientation skit) and to the interpersonal encounters in cohorts among students from different disciplines. In effect, students in cohorts learned what they could count on each other for, some of which was personally based and some of which derived from professional disciplines. Other curricula with more coursework, like that of SFSU or the OSU Commission, could entail more lengthy exposure to the

way each profession thinks and practices, but even there the choice is generally made to concentrate on frameworks, ideas, and skills that the professions *share*, rather than those things that distinguish them from each other. In this sense, all the curricula offer a similar answer to the second question, regarding how much to concentrate on shared knowledge about collaboration itself. All the curricula assume that a greater whole transcends the sum of the parts—in other words, there exists a set of predispositions and principles that are not specific to any particular professional specialty and are essential for all novice collaborators to grasp.

Knowledge of Collaborative Process or of Substantive Content?

But the preceding assertion about cross-cutting, common knowledge begs questions about what the greater whole consists of: a set of ideas and techniques for carrying out collaborative work over time? A body of information about targets, forms, and results of particular collaborative activities? Some combination?

The UW curriculum clearly opted to make conceptual and experiential knowledge of collaborative process its centerpiece. While acknowledging that other realms of knowledge about interprofessional work matter (e.g., “organizational savvy” in the community colloquium topic list), the cohort design, major textbook readings, and guiding ideas maximize students’ exposure to the workings of interprofessional collaboration in small interdisciplinary groups, and to predictable events and approaches to nurturing an unfolding collaborative process over time. This decision makes good sense from one point of view: students face the task of building a working collaboration among them (as professionals do in the world of practice), and among their biggest concerns are questions of process, as are the biggest barriers they face. The process focus may also have represented a relatively easy point of convergence among the different professionals who created the curriculum. But therein lies a grand trade-off. With a process-focused curriculum, students may internalize the idea that the key to effective collaboration is sophistication in interpersonal, organizational, or systemic processes, while losing sight of the reasons for collaborating or failing to grapple sufficiently with the nature of the “problems” that collaboration addresses. The question hinges on balancing ends and means, and “interprofessional collaboration” is only a means to an end.

Several other curricula reviewed above balance these matters differently. The Miami/Ohio program places far greater emphasis on helping students develop a unifying vision of human needs and social responses to them, along with a set of core values that would support these responses in several different professional contexts, an emphasis that may be facilitated by the positioning of this program in the undergraduate curriculum. Similarly, the curriculum of the OSU Commission features questions of ethics prominently. But having backed away from such a central focus on processes, the range of relevant substantive content is vast, and difficult decisions remain. *Which* vision of the good society does one take (or construct), and what room is there for alternative visions, especially those rooted in

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different disciplines? What knowledge of social problems, and from what perspectives are these problems to be construed? It is possible that, with time and increasing acceptance of the need for interprofessional education, cross-disciplinary consensus will emerge around substantive content areas—views of human development, for example, or even collaborative process itself—that all professional disciplines share and believe to be important “core” knowledge. But until such a consensus develops, curriculum designers must cast about in a sea of potentially relevant content.

Acquisition of Skills, Predispositions, or Conceptual Knowledge?

However curricula balance their emphases on collaborative process and the conditions that prompt collaboration, the question remains whether interprofessional preparation curricula should concentrate on building skills that have direct practical application to collaborative practice, inculcating predispositions towards clients and practice that will support collaboration, developing ways of thinking about collaborative work and the problems that prompt it, or some combination. The UW team wrestled with this question and, in framing notions of collaborative “competency,” found it hard to draw clear and useful distinctions among skills (capabilities and behaviors), predispositions (attitudes or values), and conceptual knowledge, and even had a tough time establishing clear analytic distinctions among overlapping competencies. By devoting such a large portion of the curriculum to experiential learning, the curriculum attempts to promote the simultaneous acquisition of all three.

Yet there are other ways to construct a curriculum, and there may be grounds for wanting to do so. For example, one could disaggregate the initial learning of particular collaborative skills from their application to particular problems, more purposefully than is done in the UW curriculum model, e.g., by starting with theory, then giving examples of applications, and finally practicing these applications. One could also more clearly distinguish a period of conceptual learning (e.g., about models for integrating service) from attempts to carry out collaborative work. There are ways that such arrangements might mitigate some of the problems that arise in implementing curricula such as UW’s, but at the same time these solutions may not respond as well to students’ felt need to learn. Underlying the design conundrum here are questions of developmental readiness for learning.

Universal, Professional Expertise or Contextualized, Local Knowledge of Communities?

The issues discussed so far concern differing conceptions of *professional* knowledge and alternative emphases in curriculum that reflect these conceptions. But a larger issue is raised by the aspiration, featured prominently in the UW program’s Five Essences, that collaborative work empowers the non-professional people who are helped, and, in fact, involves them as collaborative partners. Here, a different kind of “expertise” comes into play—that derives from intimate local knowledge of particular communities and their needs. Non-professional people are

often steeped in such knowledge, as are some professional people who make it their business to develop longterm working relationships with communities, and perhaps live in them as well. Bringing community people into collaborative human services means, among other things, valuing and drawing on this alternative form of expertise. So, too, curriculum design faces another trade-off: whether to maximize students' exposure to generic professional ideas (about collaborative process, content, mission, etc.) or to balance this exposure with immersion in particular communities of need.

UW's design tried to balance the two by orienting the cohorts' work to community-designed needs, by locating cohort activities in the community, and by involving community "experts" (both professional and non-professional people) in cohort work from the beginning. The assumption was that students would get more than enough professional ideas from their interactions on campus and from the fact that almost all of their contacts would be with other professional people.

The Nature of Interprofessional Knowledge: Fluid or Fixed?

Implied by questions of the place of contextualized expertise in interprofessional practice and preparation is a conception of interprofessional "knowledge" as something other than the fixed, cumulative body of expertise assumed by conventional views of knowledge in many domains. This alternative view holds that the "knowledge" held by competent collaborators is more emergent, fluid, and situation-specific than the model of expert knowledge that prevails in many domains, especially in academic disciplines, where theory, research findings, and wisdom are often assumed to cumulate in an enduring structure of thought and understandings that can inform future actions and research. There are many critics of such views, in academia and elsewhere, and their critiques presume that "knowledge" in *any* realm of endeavor, no less interprofessional work, is subjective, political, negotiated, and context-dependent.

Such alternative views of interprofessional knowledge are part of the justification for curricula like that of the UW's team. In essence, this curriculum presumes that participation in interprofessional collaboration involves inevitable uncertainties and a constant process of negotiation among participants to establish what is relevant to the situation at hand. In this sense, while there may be orienting principles and underlying core values that guide action (e.g., the Five Essences), there is no one clearly established and "known" path to follow, to ensure positive results. Accordingly, while it offers various ideas about good practice and a chance to practice particular skills (like listening well to clients and including stakeholders at the table), the curriculum maximizes occasions in which students can make choices, construct useful joint understandings, and develop modes of joint work, while minimizing occasions in which students are presented with a definitive set of "good practices."

Assumptions About Acquiring Interprofessional Knowledge

The resolution of questions about the knowledge base itself are intimately linked to assumptions about how students acquire it. Two sets of assumptions stand out in this regard—the first concerns the respective roles of experience, reflection, and didactic presentation in acquiring (and personally constructing) the skills, dispositions, and conceptual understandings that interprofessional collaborators need; and the second involves questions of prerequisite knowledge and the sequencing of opportunities for constructing or encountering meanings.

The Role of Experience, Reflection, and Didactic Presentation

As argued above, a fluid, situational conception of the knowledge to be acquired lends itself to experiential modes of learning. Not surprisingly, all four of the curricula feature experiential learning to some degree, ranging from the intensive program-long group experience of the UW curriculum to the shorter individual internships of the SFSU program to a variety of service learning and fieldwork opportunities offered by the other two. The essential questions for curriculum design are: what kind of experience in what kind of settings? How much of it? How to give it meaning?

The programs reviewed above answer these questions differently. UW's curriculum assumes that group experience is the most important kind, because groups can simulate in microcosm the interaction of multiple perspectives that lies at the heart of interprofessional collaboration. The curriculum further assumes that the experience should be intensive, long-term, and community-based. In this conception, groups are composed of students primarily, who represent different professional disciplines, but other perspectives are also included, for example, those of the cohort facilitators and the community members who are invited to join the cohort. In some ways the logic for such a design is compelling, yet at the same time there are counter views, represented in part by the alternative programs, that may make sense in particular contexts. For example, by building individual practicum experiences in established interagency arrangements, the SFSU program can tailor learning situations to particular student needs and backgrounds, while ensuring them exposure to experienced collaborators. The UW design, by contrast, does not rule out the possibility that, in student-led cohorts, the "blind may lead the blind" in counterproductive directions, despite the best efforts of cohort facilitators. But to pursue the SFSU design one must be assured of a ready supply of viable collaboratives in close proximity to the university, a condition that did not pertain in UW's context.

Extracting meaning from experience is another matter; even well designed experiential situations are no guarantee of *learning from* experience. UW relied

primarily on the interactive, reflective process taking place within cohort groups and colloquium discussions, coupled with students' journal writing and the transfer of ideas from readings and presentations. In a sense, this feature encourages a good deal of personal sense-making to take place, subject to the idiosyncrasies of each learner, the learner's cohort in its unique local context, or the discussion groups in which the learner participates. The same could be said of the field supervisor-supervisee relationship in the SFSU designs and the reflective seminar components found in most of the curricula. If experience is supposed to yield a consistent message to the learner, none of these curricula lends itself to constructed and controlled experiential situations (such as those that pertain in learning laboratories) in which a structured and predictable set of lessons about interprofessional collaboration can be "delivered." These curricula presume, in one way or another, that laboratory-controlled experiences would be inherently unrealistic and unrepresentative of what is involved in actual collaborative work.

Prerequisite Knowledge and the Developmental Sequencing of Learning Opportunities

How students rise to the challenges that experience presents and what sense they make of that experience are in part a function of what they already know and have the skills to do, combined with what they come to know and do as they progress through the program. The UW team worried considerably about what students needed to know early in their program in order to make the most out of the cohort experience. Over time the group evolved a design that progressively offered more information and direct teaching up front, before the cohort experience got underway, though the design team never resolved, to its satisfaction or that of the students, how much and exactly what should be offered up front.

Other than knowledge of the student's own chosen discipline, a matter that was out of the hands of the designers of the interprofessional curriculum, three kinds of prerequisite knowledge could come into play: first, conceptual frameworks for thinking about the targets, forms, and techniques of collaboration (e.g., to help students imagine how they could structure their work together); second, mastery of particular skills (such as how to lead interdisciplinary group meetings productively); and, third, knowledge of the community in which the collaborative activity would take place. The UW design and, to an extent, the SFSU design as well attempt to offer something related to all three of these, as a prelude to engaging in cohort activity, but stop well short of building a substantial repertoire of frameworks, skills, and community information before students engage in community-based project work or practicum activity. The program of OSU, in contrast, makes such a pattern of building prerequisite knowledge easier, by having students take various courses before they embark on field work, though at the possible expense of understanding collaborative challenges first-hand.

Evolving Curriculum Designs and Moving Beyond Them

The foregoing analysis takes us part way toward understanding how the design and structure of an interprofessional curriculum conditions what it can accomplish and what students can ultimately learn from it. Clearly, there are many reasonable designs, and each enables certain interprofessional learning goals to be achieved while limiting others. But there is more to the story than design. To use the language of curriculum theorists, we have concentrated so far on the *intended* curriculum. The *enacted* curriculum (what takes place as curriculum is implemented) and the *received* curriculum (what students learn from it) are matters further described elsewhere (Knapp & Associates, 1998).

The UW curriculum design—the intended curriculum described above—did not appear full blown in the minds of the designers, but rather evolved gradually and sometimes painfully across a three-year period through a process in which initial curriculum ideas were enacted and revised based on our experiences, frustrations, and discoveries, and those of our students. For example, the curriculum of the first-year pilot was far more conventionally framed—as a course on interprofessional collaboration, paralleled by individual practicum assignments in settings where collaboration was presumed to be taking place. This first pilot worked in some ways, and failed miserably in others.

This early enactment of curriculum and the students' response to it prompted several years of experimentation with successive versions of the cohort model. Enactment of a first attempt at a cohort design yielded more positive results and hinted at powerful learning opportunities, yet were realized unevenly. Students struggled endlessly to invent a community-oriented project, and often felt they were doing so in a vacuum. But once they did so, they became fiercely committed to their chosen projects, and progressively less interested in the allocation of time for reading, reflection, and construction of meaning. They still wanted conceptual frameworks to guide their work, and more practice in specific collaborative skills, yet the unpredictability of the collaborative process in the cohorts often made it difficult to anticipate when and how to meet these needs. This experience led us to embellish the design in several ways: by increasing our emphasis on empowerment, generating project ideas from the community itself, and providing more information and conceptual work up front (the two-day orientation meeting in the Fall Quarter, for example, was born in this way).

The curriculum design evolved as we learned. We would assert that curriculum design in interprofessional programs is likely to necessitate an extended learning process of this sort on the part of those who design and carry out the program. The experiences of program builders at San Francisco State, Ohio State, and Miami/Ohio would support our claim. The nature of the program's focus—collaborative work that crosses disciplinary lines—lends itself to curricular designs that depart

substantially from traditions in academic teaching. To arrive at such designs, participants who proceed from very different knowledge bases must find consensus on "the knowledge of most worth," in ways that draw on and reflect the bodies of expertise embedded in their respective professions. And they must agree on a psychology of learning, a set of shared beliefs about how interprofessional knowledge is best acquired by the kinds of students they serve. Arriving at these agreements involves time, risk, trial, and error, but with that kind of investment, a solid, truly *interprofessional* curriculum may result.

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